

the deficit," and he specifically mentioned Medicare. They first create the deficit by these huge tax cuts for the wealthiest corporations and individuals, and then they take it out on the middle class by saying: We have no choice but to cut Medicare. What is the matter? I hope the American people will see this. I hope some of the news channels and radio commentators will note this, since those are the people who listen to them.

By the way, that is only what we know about the bill. It was muscled through the Chamber with such reckless haste, we are finding errors and consequences every day. In yesterday's *POLITICO*, Greg Jenner, a former top tax official in Bush's Treasury Department who helped write the 1986 tax reform bill, was quoted as saying:

The more you read [of the Republican tax bill], the more you go, "Holy crap, what's this?" We will be dealing with unintended consequences for months to come because the bill is moving too fast.

That is a Republican, a former tax official from President Bush's Treasury Department.

When we were debating the Affordable Care Act—a process that took over a year—the esteemed majority leader admonished: We need to slow down and get this right.

The tax bill, by comparison, spent hardly 2 weeks in the House and 3 weeks in the Senate, and it is a lot worse for the average middle-class person. I would say the same thing to the majority leader that he said to us: Slow down and get this right. There is no need to rush this hastily considered, highly complex, hugely consequential tax bill before some artificial deadline.

We have a responsibility to get this right for the American people, particularly the American middle class. I still believe the way to do it is through an open, transparent, and bipartisan debate.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Maryland is recognized.

#### INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS DAY

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, on December 10 of this week, we will celebrate International Human Rights Day. It is the 69th anniversary of the United Nations' adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It provided inalienable rights for everyone in this world to be entitled to basic human rights, regardless of their religion, regardless of their race, their color, their gender, their language, their politics, their national origin, their property, wealth, birth, whatever. You are entitled to basic human rights.

The declaration further goes on to say that the ignoring and contempt of human rights have been among the principal causes of the suffering of humanity. That clearly has been the case throughout the history of the world

and is still relevant today—very relevant today.

The interesting thing about the universal declaration is that it acknowledges that we all have responsibilities. This is not just a country responsibility; we, as citizens of the world, have an obligation to challenge when human rights are violated anywhere in the world. That is our responsibility. It is interesting that one of the responsibilities I have as the ranking Senate Democrat on the Helsinki Commission, which is the organization that monitors our participants and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe—that declaration, the Helsinki accords, which was entered into in 1975, was an acknowledgement of basic human rights; it is a responsibility of all the participating countries to adhere to basic human rights. The Helsinki accords also make it very clear that any member country of the OSCE has the right to challenge what is happening in any other country. We have a responsibility as global citizens to speak out when basic human rights are being violated.

I also point out that this is one of the basic tenets of America's strength. One value embodied in our Constitution, embodied in our history, is a respect for human rights, and it makes America the unique Nation it is. Yes, we are looked upon as a global power because of our military and economy, but I must tell you, the real trademark of America, the real value we give to the international debate is the fact that we bring a commitment to basic human rights and values as part of our DNA. That has been very much demonstrated in so many ways.

I am proud of many of our accomplishments on behalf of international human rights. America's leadership on trafficking in persons—there have been Democrats and Republicans who have taken the lead on this to make it clear that we will not tolerate modern-day slavery. We took the lead on that; Congress took the lead on that. We passed the "Trafficking in Persons Report." We now monitor activities in every country in the world, including the United States, in order to protect against modern-day slavery.

I am proud of the passage of, first, the Magnitsky statute, which dealt with Russia, and now the global Magnitsky statute, which says: If a country does not hold accountable their gross violators of human rights, we will not give them access to our banking system or the ability to visit our country. When we passed that law, other countries followed suit. Europe has enacted the Magnitsky statute, Canada has enacted it, and individual countries have enacted it. We show leadership, and the world follows. We have effective tools to say that we will stand up and live up to our commitments to enforce human rights.

What we often do is put a spotlight on those human rights defenders who are being persecuted around the world.

By putting a spotlight on it, we give them hope. That is what we did in regard to the human rights defenders in China, human rights defenders in so many places around the world.

Quite frankly, one of the principal functions of our missions in countries around the world is to be there to speak out for basic human rights, to speak out in support of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. I am proud of our Foreign Service officers who carry that mission every day in every country around the world.

When potential nominees for Ambassadors come before our committee, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, we question them as to their commitment to support American values on human rights and what they will do in the country they will be representing America in order to advance those causes. This is part of our responsibility based upon the United Nations declaration, but it is also part of what we need to do in order for us to stay safe.

We know there is a direct correlation between a country's respect for human rights and the amount of conflict, the amount of violence, the amount of insurgency that takes place within that country. Violent extremists will have a place to breathe if a country doesn't respect the human rights of its citizens. It is in our national security interests, in addition to doing what is right as a nation and as a global citizen.

We have challenges today. We have autocratic leaders around the world who are violating every day the human rights of their citizens. We need to help lead the international community. We see attacks on journalism and the rights of free press, where it is, in many places in the world, not safe to comment freely about what is happening in a country.

The LGBT community has been under constant attack in many parts of the world, and we need to defend their rights. Human rights defenders are being imprisoned in so many countries around the world. We need to stand up for their rights. Yes, in trafficking in persons, Senator CORKER and I recently put a spotlight on what is happening in Libya, where they actually have slave auctions that are taking place, where people are being sold. We can't be silent about those types of activities or, in our own hemisphere, about what is happening in Venezuela, where there is a government that is denying its own people the right of access to international humanitarian aid. People are dying in hospitals because they can't get medical supplies. We need to speak out about that.

Many of us have come to the floor to talk about the challenges we have as global citizens on the number of refugees, the displaced persons we have. We have numbers now that we haven't seen since the end of World War II of people who do not have a home, who are refugees. We need to do something

about that. The most recent mass number left Burma because of the persecution of the Rohingya Muslims, and they are now in Bangladesh in horrible conditions. We all have a responsibility to respond. There are a number of refugees from Syria—huge numbers—and it requires U.S. leadership.

This has been a bipartisan commitment in the Senate and a bipartisan commitment in the Congress, but I must tell you that I am disappointed by President Trump's failure to lead on this issue. He recently visited Asia. What an opportunity that would have been to have brought up the human rights struggles, whether they are in North Korea, which is the worst country in the world on human rights, or China, which has significant challenges, particularly with respect to its religious minorities, but also as to the right of its people to have economic freedom. There are major problems in China and problems in the Philippines with its President and what he does in regard to extrajudicial killings. The President hardly mentioned human rights at all during his trip to East Asia.

He embraces leaders like Mr. Putin of Russia, who is a gross violator of the rights of his own people, and President Duterte of the Philippines, whom I already mentioned. President Trump embraces those types of leaders. We should be pointing out that Mr. Putin should be held accountable for his violations of human rights, and President Duterte should be held accountable for the extrajudicial killings that take place under his watch. The United States should be in the lead in bringing these issues to the public's attention.

Then there is the President's immigration policies. We have always been the leader in the world's effort to welcome those who have been persecuted in other countries. We talk about our historical commitment of welcoming the huddled masses who are yearning to breathe free. That is America. Now we are closing our borders to refugees—to those who are being persecuted? We say to the countries in the Middle East: Open up your borders to the refugees from Syria or open up your borders to the refugees from that region. Yet, in the United States, we cannot handle a few numbers?

We need to have much stronger and enlightened policies as we are now talking about people who have been long-term Americans. They only know America as their home. We are now telling the Dreamers or those under temporary protected status, because they have fled the gang violence in El Salvador or Honduras: You are no longer welcome in the only country you know, America. President Trump needs to lead on this issue because it is our global responsibility, and it is in the interest of our country.

Yes, Human Rights Day is coming up this week. Let's rededicate ourselves to fight on behalf of human rights globally. That is our responsibility. It is who we are as a nation, and it is who we are as global citizens.

I urge my colleagues to remember the words of John F. Kennedy when he said that, here on Earth, God's work must be our own. That is true. Let us carry on the work of respecting the human rights of all people in the world.

I suggest the absence of a quorum. The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. STRANGE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SUL-LIVAN). Without objection, it is so ordered.

#### FAREWELL TO THE SENATE

Mr. STRANGE. Mr. President, I rise today to address my colleagues for the last time. After nearly a year in this Chamber, I am both its newest Member and the next to depart. As such, I have both the optimism of a young student and the battle scars of a man in the arena. Today I would like to offer my colleagues some observations from the perspective of my unique circumstances.

My fellow Senators and I come from different places. We were raised differently, and we have lived differently. In coming to serve in the world's greatest deliberative body, we have carried and tested different notions of America.

There is, however, one reality that transcends our individual experiences. In this Chamber, we are each humbled by history. The Senate has been a forum for some of the great debates of our Republic. It has shaped—and has been shaped by—citizen legislators from every State in the Union. We are awed by the strength of an institution that has weathered great challenges and the wisdom of those who first envisioned it.

As I rise today in that spirit, I would like to shed some light on a page of Senate history that bears great significance in our current political climate. As we know, across the aisle behind us is a space known as the Marble Room. In a building that is home to so many breathtaking historic sites, this alcove has a singular beauty and a story worth telling.

As part of the 1850s expansion of the Senate's Chambers, the Marble Room began as a public gathering place and has been frequented over the decades by politicians and protesters alike. When the Union Army camped on the grounds of the Capitol, soldiers even used its fireplaces for cooking.

For over 60 years, the Marble Room was steeped in the life of the American citizen. It hosted meetings with advocates, constituents, and the free press. It became a very tangible example of our Nation's experiment in representative government. In March of 1921, it took on a new, equally important purpose. The space was reserved by the Rules Committee as an escape for Senators from the crowded halls of the Capitol and the windowless, smoke-filled rooms where they often had to

gather off the floor. It became the place where Senators of all stripes would come to catch their breath and take their armor off. Some would nap, some would eat lunch, some would read the newspapers, and all would end up forming bonds that rose above politics.

Today the Marble Room is almost always empty. This emptiness symbolizes something that worries me about today's politics. It is likely both a symptom and a cause of the partisan gridlock that often dominates this Chamber.

But the story of that room—the interplay between citizens and institution, between pragmatism and principle—is the story of the Senate and in some ways the story of republican government in America.

What was once an incubator for collegiality and bipartisanship has become a glaring reminder of the divisions that we have allowed to distract us from the business of the American people. We each remain humbled by the history of the Marble Room. We stand in awe of the traditions of this hallowed body, but too often we fail to let this history be our guide through today's political challenges.

My time in the Senate has reinforced for me what it means to balance principle and pragmatism and to serve the people of my State honorably, and it has taught me how to navigate the turbulent waters of Washington. I imagine that our predecessors who spent time together in the Marble Room wrestled with similar questions.

After all, the issues we face today are not all that different. This body has been strained before—it has bent but has not broken. Finding lasting solutions to our Nation's problems does not require reinventing the wheel. Our forefathers have done it before, and they have done it right across the hall.

I spent my early years growing up in Sylacauga, AL—familiar to my friend the senior Senator—about 40 miles outside of Birmingham. My first hometown is known as the Marble City for the swath of high-quality stone it sits upon, 32 miles long and as much as 600 feet deep.

Sylacauga marble is recognized for its pure white color and its fine texture. Here in the Nation's Capital, we are surrounded by it. It is set into the ceiling of the Lincoln Memorial and the halls of the Supreme Court, and it was used by renowned sculptor Gutzon Borglum to create the bust of Abraham Lincoln that is on display in the crypt downstairs.

Sylacauga marble is used in places infused with tradition and deep history. It is used to enshrine important landmarks. It ensures that memories of the past will stand the test of time to inform the decisions of the future.

In a small house in the Marble City, I was raised by a family that instilled in me a deep and abiding reverence for